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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE December 13, 1978
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Dear Mr. Annunzio:

Thank you for your letter of November 27 in which you requested information about the U.S. response to the Guyana tragedy.

On Sunday, November 19, it had become clear that the United States Government was facing a major crisis in Guyana. An American Congressman and other Americans in his party had been killed. A settlement believed to include over 1,000 Americans was involved, and its situation was uncertain. It was apparent that the Government of Guyana required assistance in handling a major emergency created by the presence of Americans within its borders.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational decisions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

Under the President's Executive authorities, medical evacuation for injured Americans was immediately ordered, and the United States Government offered assistance to the Government of Guyana to prevent further loss of life.

The Honorable
Frank Annunzio,
House of Representatives.

As events progressed, it became clear that there were large numbers of Americans dead. For a time, it was believed that there were survivors in the jungle; and the United States adjusted and increased its assistance to help the search by Guyana police and military. Finally, when the full scope of the tragedy of Jonestown was clear, our Government was requested by the Government of Guyana to remove the bodies. This operation was considered essential in handling the emergency situation which existed in Guyana at the time.

The Justice Department is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. Now that the emergency is substantially over, the Office of Management and Budget and other agencies are reviewing the various operations to determine the exact cost to the United States Government. Although the costs to the United States Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable, they are substantially lower than the $8 million figure used in some press reports. Please be assured that we will report fully to appropriate congressional committees on these aspects of the operation upon completion of our review. Meanwhile, the Justice Department will make all efforts to recover the costs to the U. S. Government.

If you have any further questions, you may wish to contact Deputy Assistant Secretary John Bushnell in our Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, whose telephone number is 632-8502.

Sincerely,

DB/GJ

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

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ARA:GLister
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H:ENef
EN/GW

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FRANK ANNUNZIO
11TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

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BANKING, FINANCE AND URBAN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
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FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS SUPERVISION, REGULATION AND INSURANCE

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CHAIRMAN, PERSONNEL AND POLICE ACCOUNTS

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DISTRICT OFFICE
SUITE 201
4747 WEST PETERSON AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60646
(312) 736-0700

LOOP OFFICE
SUITE 3840
KLUCZYNSKI BUILDING
230 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604
(312) 13-2525

WASHINGTON OFFICE
SUITE 2303
RAYBURN OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6661

November 27, 1978

4 ACTION
is assigned to
ARA

Mr. Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Doug:

I am contacting you in behalf of a number of my constituents who have informed me of their great concern over the expenditure of tax dollars for the purpose of returning over 900 bodies to the United States from Guyana.

Would you kindly inform me who is paying for this expense which has been estimated as high as $8 million? Additionally, in view of the fact that the "Peoples Temple" had up to $12 million in various bank accounts here and abroad, has your office given any thought to recouping the cost of transferring the bodies, which has already been incurred, from the money in these bank accounts. The amount of money involved here is certainly large enough to justify every effort to see that our government is reimbursed.

I await hearing from you on the actions being taken by the State Department regarding this matter and appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Frank Annunzio

FRANK ANNUNZIO
Member of Congress

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